

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

An Organization Dedicated to Improving the Lives of Kansans with Mental Illnesses

Testimony presented to House Federal and State Affairs on HB 2517

Amy A. Campbell – February 15, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Kansas Mental Health Coalition (KMHC) regarding HB 2517. The Kansas Mental Health Coalition is dedicated to improving the lives of Kansans living with Mental Illnesses and Severe Emotional Disorders. We are consumer and family advocates, provider associations, direct services providers, non-profit and for profit entities and others who share a common mission. At monthly roundtable meetings, participants develop and track a consensus agenda that provides the basis for legislative advocacy efforts each year. This format enables many groups, that would otherwise be unable to participate in the policy making process, to have a voice in public policy matters that directly affect the lives of their constituencies. The opportunity for dialogue and the development of consensus makes all of us stronger and more effective in achieving our mission.

Kansas needs Funding for Community Treatment Options for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders to Close Gaps in the Continuum of Care – HB 2517 would clarify the source of funding passed last year by the Legislature and vetoed by the Governor.

The Coalition commends the 2017 Legislature for recognizing the crisis currently facing our mental health system. Last year, legislation was passed to fund mental health reform grants for community based treatment and expand crisis stabilization programs. This was an extremely important investment to begin turning around our eroding behavioral health continuum of care, but too many Kansans with mental illness or substance use disorders are currently being turned away from the state hospital, or jailed, or trapped in a cycle of arrests and homelessness. This is far from the goal of delivering the right care at the right time in the right place.

We have been very encouraged by the active interest of state legislators in the recommendations of the Adult Continuum of Care Report (2015 and January 2017 Update) and now the Mental Health Task Force Report (January 2018). Implementing these recommendations will move Kansas out of its current crisis – but they require ongoing funding resources. The Coalition does not have a position regarding whether or not vending machines are the right resource, but we do support immediate investments in community based treatment options to serve our most vulnerable Kansans. It took more than ten years to get into this mess and it will take a multi-year strategy to end the crisis.

The Adult Continuum of Care Report highlighted the continued erosion of the behavioral health continuum of care that has occurred over more than a decade. That report called out the positive developments, including RSI, Inc., and other diversion and crisis programs in Topeka and Wichita, but clearly stated that the overall system has degraded and cannot meet the statewide need. The Mental Health Task Force Report prioritized recommendations developed through years of task forces and advisory committees.

The Kansas Mental Health Coalition supports the recommendations of the Adult Continuum of Care Task Force and the priority recommendations of the Mental Health Task Force Report.

The objectives of these reports are to close some of the gaps in the continuum of care and provide alternatives and support to state hospital treatment in order to move us toward strategic planning and away from managing one crisis after another. We would be happy to visit with committee members about the recommendations and provide copies of the reports if requested.

For More Information, Contact:

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